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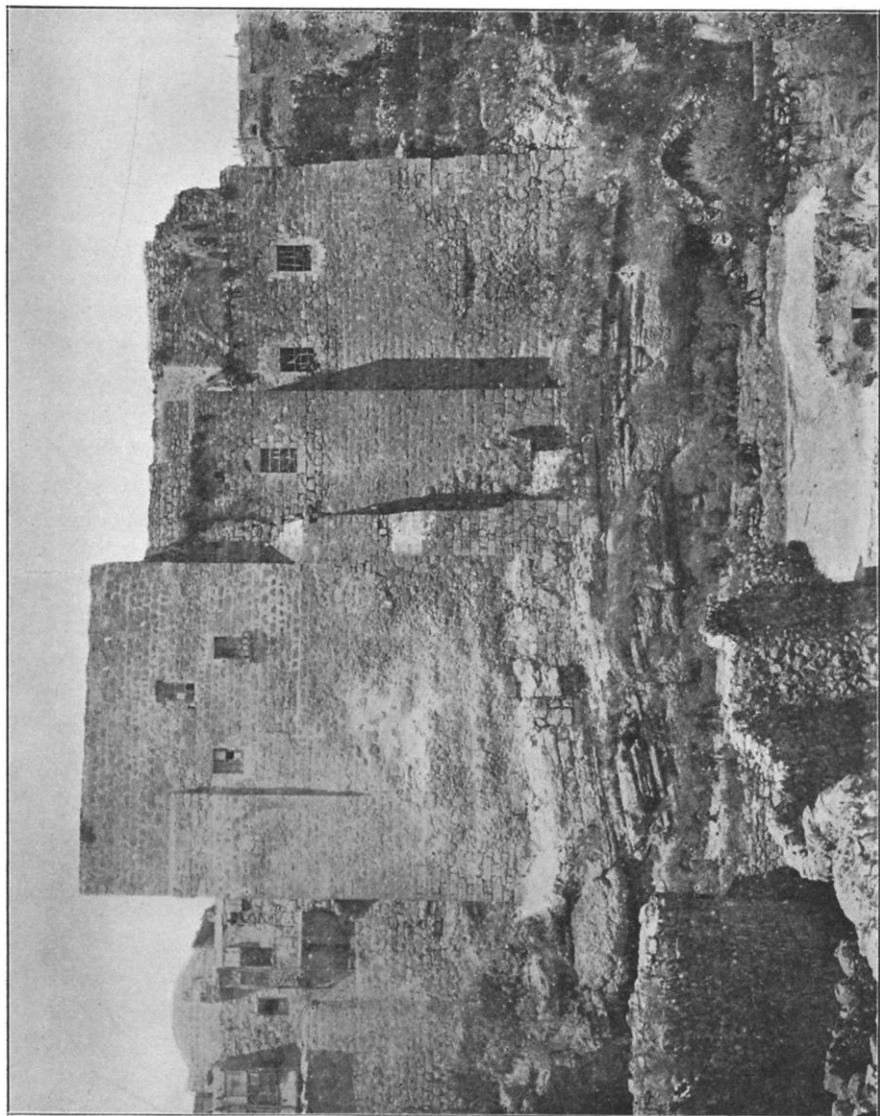
JERUSALEM IN BIBLE TIMES

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II. THE VALLEYS OF ANCIENT JERUSALEM

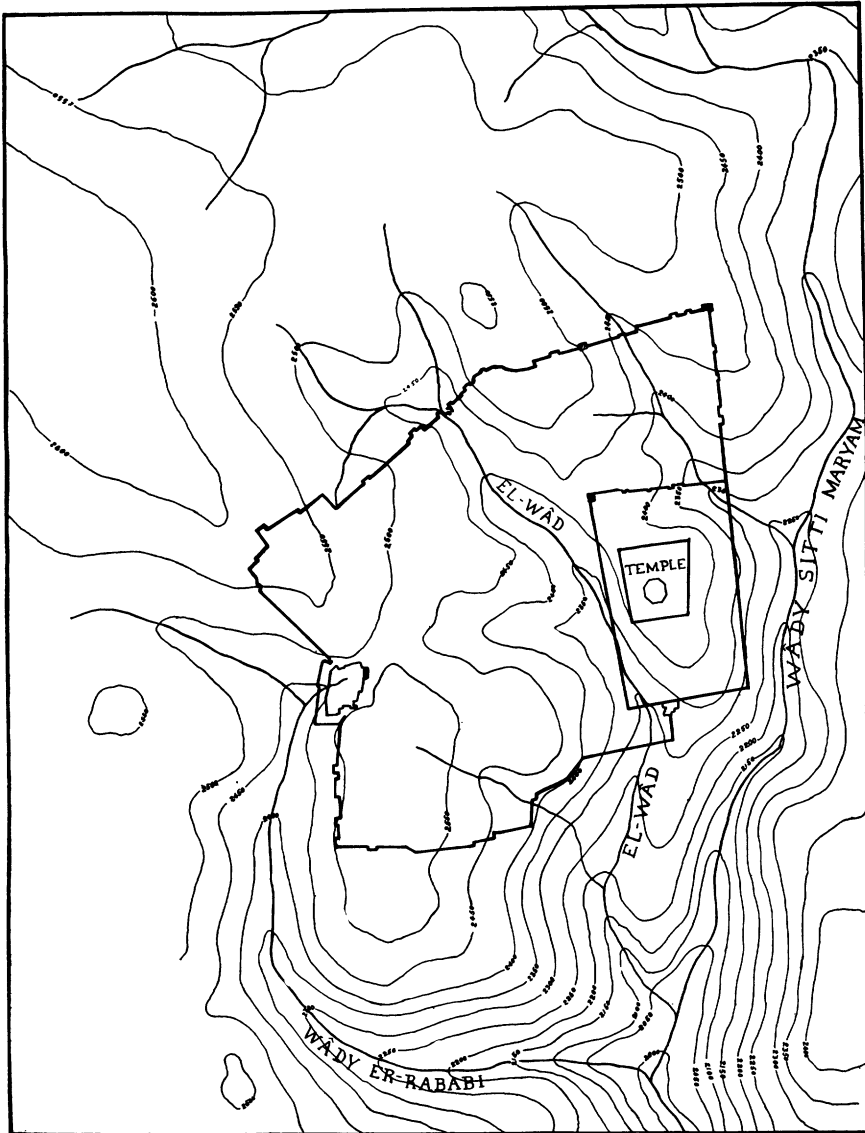
Jerusalem lies on a plateau between two deep gorges. The principal one of these starts north of the city in an insignificant depression known as Wâdy ej-Jôz, or "Valley of the Walnuts." In its upper reaches this lies about 2,500 feet above the sea. It circles around at some distance from the northeast corner of the city and then falls rapidly in a southwesterly direction, continually approaching the eastern wall. At a point opposite the southeast corner of the city, it lies 200 feet below its source. Between this point and its junction with the other main valley it falls 300 feet more. In this portion of its course it is known as Wâdy Sitti Maryam, or "Valley of the Lady Mary," being so named from the Virgin's Fountain that lies in its midst. Below its junction with the other main valley it is known as Wâdy en-Nâr, or "Valley of Fire." This falls rapidly between lofty cliffs to the Dead Sea, 1,300 feet below sea-level.

The Wâdy Sitti Maryam has very precipitous sides. At all points its banks are so steep that they render the city impregnable on its eastern side. The cliffs are full of rock-hewn tombs, which show that once there existed here an important ancient city. The commanding sepulchral monuments known as the Tomb of Absalom, the Tomb of James, and the Tomb of Zechariah, near the southeast corner of the Haram, or Mosque area, are conspicuous landmarks. The view of Jerusalem from the lower end of this valley, looking up toward the Mosque on the left and the village of Silwân on the right, is very imposing. This valley is dry, except during the rainy months when a considerable stream flows through it. The water of the Virgin's Fountain, which must formerly have entered it, is now diverted through the Siloam tunnel. The result is that the Wâdy has a drier appearance at present than it must have had in ancient times.



Palestine Exploration Fund

CLIFF IN JERUSALEM ON WEST SIDE OF TYROPOEON VALLEY



THE VALLEYS OF JERUSALEM

The second main valley of Jerusalem begins as a slight depression, 2,500 feet above the sea, west of the modern city, and runs in a southeasterly direction to a point near the Citadel, where it is joined by another small depression that comes from the Jaffa Gate; it then descends rapidly close to the west wall of the city. At a point opposite the southwest corner it is 2,300 feet above the sea, and at its junction with the Wâdy Sitti Maryam it is 2,000 feet above the sea. In its lower course south of the city it runs almost due east.



Photograph by L. B. Paton

WÂDY SITTI MARYAM

This valley is known at present as Wâdy er-Rabâbi, or "Fiddle Valley." Like the Wâdy Sitti Maryam, it has very precipitous sides, and protects the city on the west and the south. The cliffs on its western and southern sides are full of ancient rock-hewn tombs. This valley contains no springs, and, therefore, is dry throughout the year except after an occasional hard rain. It is a smaller depression than Wâdy Sitti Maryam, and therefore is properly regarded as a branch of that valley.

The third in importance of the valleys of Jerusalem is the one which begins in the plain north of the Damascus Gate and runs in a southeasterly direction through the heart of the modern city to a point near the southwest angle of the Ḥaram area. Here it is joined by a branch that comes from the Jaffa Gate. It then descends in a southwesterly direction to the Pool of Siloam. Near this it is joined by another small branch that comes from the southwest corner of the city. It then runs in a southeasterly direction until it



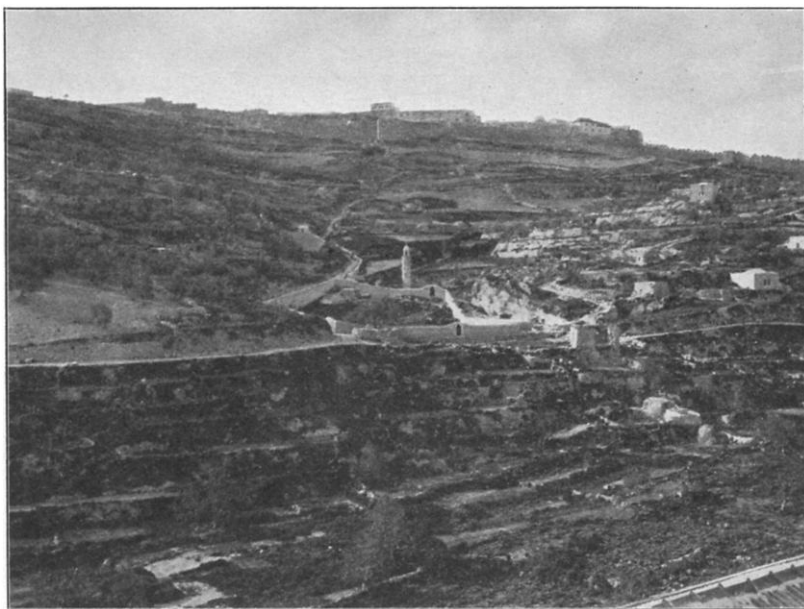
Photograph by L. B. Paton

WADY ER-RABÂBI

joins the Wâdy Sitti Maryam. This valley is known at present as El-Wâd, or "The Valley." It is the second main tributary of the Wâdy Sitti Maryam and its continuation the Wâdy en-Nâr.

A fourth valley begins in the plain north of the city midway between Wâdy ej-Joz and El-Wâd, and runs in a southeasterly direction across the northeast corner of the city, joining Wâdy Sitti Maryam at a point east of the Ḥaram area. This has no distinctive modern name. The question now arises: With which of these valleys are the valleys mentioned in the Old Testament to be identified?

1. *The Kidron*.—This is commonly known as the *naḥal*, or “watercourse” (in our version translated “brook”). Frequently the name Kidron is omitted, and the valley is described simply as the *naḥal*. In Hebrew this term describes a ravine in which water commonly runs. It is not applied to gorges that are filled only in the rainy season. The name, consequently, suggests that we are to identify the Kidron with the Wādy Sitti Maryam, since this is the only one of the valleys of Jerusalem that has a perennial flow.



Photograph by L. B. Paton

MOUTH OF THE VALLEY EL-WAÎ

This identification is confirmed by all the allusions in the Bible. In II Sam. 15:23 we are told that, when David was compelled by Absalom to flee from Jerusalem to the land east of the Jordan, “he passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over toward the way of the wilderness.” In fleeing eastward from Jerusalem, the first valley that one would cross would be the Wādy Sitti Maryam. The word of Solomon to Shimei in I Kings 2:37, “On the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, know thou for certain

that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head," also indicates the valley east of the city, since Shimei would naturally pass this way in going to his home (cf. II Sam. 16:5). In I Kings 15:13=II Chron. 15:16 we read: "And also Maacah, the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an abominable image for an Asherah; and Asa cut down her image, and made dust of it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron." The image was evidently set up in the Temple, and if Asa burned it at the brook Kidron, this must have been the Wâdy Sitti Maryam, which runs close to the site of the Temple. In II Kings 23:4, 6, 12, we are told that, when Josiah cleansed the Temple of idolatrous abominations, "he burned them at the brook Kidron and cast the ashes into the brook." This statement implies that the Kidron lay near to the Temple, and the mention of the "brook" favors the identification with the Wâdy Sitti Maryam. In Jer. 31:40 we read: "All the fields unto the brook Kidron, unto the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east shall be holy unto the Lord." The Horse Gate is known to have been an opening in the east wall of the Temple; consequently the brook Kidron, which is here associated with it, must be identical with the Wâdy Sitti Maryam. II Chron. 29:16 states that idolatrous objects found in the Temple were cast into the brook Kidron. II Chron. 32:4 says that Hezekiah "gathered much people together, and they stopped all the fountains, and the brook that flowed through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?" The statement that the "brook" contained "much water" is applicable only to the Wâdy Sitti Maryam, and the statement that it "flowed through the midst of the land" is also applicable only to this valley. Wâdy er-Rabâbi, as we shall see presently, was the boundary line between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and therefore could not be spoken of as "in the midst of the land." El-Wâd was in the midst of the city, and, besides, there is no evidence that it was a running stream in Old Testament times. In Neh. 2:15 Nehemiah says: "Then went I up in the night by the brook and viewed the wall; and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned." On his night ride Nehemiah set out from a point near the southwest corner of the present city and descended the Wâdy er-Rabâbi until

he came to the Pool of Siloam. Thence he "went up by the brook and viewed the wall." This "brook" can only have been the Wâdy Sitti Maryam close to the east wall of the city. If he had gone up through El-Wâd, he would have been in the heart of the city and could not have viewed the wall. The fact that he returned by the Valley Gate, whence he set out, shows that he made a complete circuit of the city.

In John 18:1 we are told that Jesus "went forth with his disciples over the brook Kidron where there was a garden." The location of the Garden of Gethsemane at some point on the west slope of the mount of Olives east of Jerusalem is undisputed. Consequently the crossing of the brook Kidron to reach this garden is proof that the Kidron is to be identified with the Wâdy Sitti Maryam.

Josephus also identifies the Kidron with this valley. In *Wars* v, 2:3, he says:

These legions had orders to encamp at the distance of six furlongs from Jerusalem, at the mount called the Mount of Olives, which lies over against the city on the east side, and is parted from it by a deep valley, interposed between them, which is named Kidron.

In *Wars*, v, 6:1, he says:

John held the Temple and also the parts thereto adjoining, for a great way, as also Ophel, and the valley called the Valley of Kidron.

In *Wars*, v, 12:2, he says:

Titus began the wall from the camp of the Assyrians, where his own camp was pitched, and drew it down to the lower parts of the New City: thence went along the valley of Kidron to the Mount of Olives; it then bent toward the south, and encompassed the mountain as far as the rock called Peristereon.

In vi, 3:2, he says:

The next day the Romans burnt down the northern cloister entirely as far as the east cloister, whose common angle joined to the valley that was called Kidron, and was built over it; on which account the depth was frightful.

From these statements it is certain that he identified the Kidron with the deep gorge east of the Temple.

It appears, accordingly, that there is an unbroken line of evidence from the earliest times down to the New Testament period identifying the brook Kidron with the ravine east of the Mosque of Omar that

is now known as the Wâdy Sitti Maryam. This is admitted by practically all modern topographers.

2. The valley named most frequently in the Old Testament after the Kidron is the Valley of Hinnom or valley of the son (sons) of Hinnom. In the Old Testament this is always called the *gai*, or "valley," in distinction from the *nahal*, or "brook," of Kidron. A *gai* is a broad, open valley, not necessarily traversed by a running stream. This name in itself suggests that the Hinnom is to be identified with the Wâdy er-Rabâbi, which is more open than Wâdy Sitti Maryam and has no stream flowing through it. All the Old Testament references to the Hinnom favor this identification.

In Josh. 15:8 we read:

And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto the side of the Jebusite southward (the same is Jerusalem): and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lieth before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the uttermost part of the vale of Rephaim northward.

In Josh. 18:16 the same description is given in a reverse order:

And the border went down to the uttermost part of the mountain that lieth before the valley of the son of Hinnom, to the side of the Jebusite southward and went down to Enrogel.

From these passages it appears that the Valley of Hinnom was the boundary line between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, that it ran south of a cliff known as the Cliff of the Jebusites, and that it came out at a spring known as Enrogel. The small valley El-Wâd, which runs north and south, is not a natural line between two tribes; while the deep Wâdy er-Rabâbi, which runs east and west, is a natural boundary. By this division the spring Bîr Eiyûb was the property of two tribes—a frequent arrangement in ancient times. It is well known that the city of Jerusalem lay in the tribe of Benjamin. Thus, in Jer. 6:1 we read: "Flee for safety, ye children of Benjamin, out of the midst of Jerusalem." The frequent combination "Judah and Jerusalem" is due to the fact that Jerusalem did not lie in the tribe of Judah. The rabbinical tradition that the boundary line between Judah and Benjamin ran through the heart of the city is unsupported by Old Testament evidence. Jerusalem as early as pre-exilic times probably occupied an area as large as the modern city; consequently, if it lay in the tribe of Benjamin,

the Valley of Hinnom cannot have been El-Wâd, in the heart of the city, but must have been Wâdy er-Rabâbi, on the west and south. The Cliff of the Jebusites is apparently some part of the ancient stronghold of the Jebusites (cf. II Sam. 5:6 f.); and if the Valley of Hinnom ran south of this cliff, it can only be the Wâdy er-Rabâbi, since El-Wâd does not lie south of any cliff that formed part of the ancient city. Moreover, El-Wâd does not run down to any spring. Siloam, where it ends, is an artificial pool to which water was brought by a conduit in Hezekiah's time from the Virgin's Fountain. The only valley, apart from the Kidron, that leads to a fountain is Wâdy er-Rabâbi, which comes out at the spring of Bîr Eiyûb.

There are frequent allusions in the Old Testament to the Valley of Hinnom as the scene of idolatrous rites in which children were sacrificed to the god Molech (cf. II Kings 23:10; Jer. 2:23; 7:31 f; 19:2, 6; 32:35); but none of these serve to fix the location of the valley. If, as is probable, El-Wâd lay in the heart of the ancient city, as of the modern city, it is not so likely that shrines would be set up there as in the Wâdy er-Rabâbi, which was outside of the city. Late Jewish abhorrence of the idolatry practiced in the Valley of Hinnom made the name Ge-Hinnom = Gehenna a synonym for hell.

In Neh. 2:13, Nehemiah goes out by the Valley Gate. This can only have been a gate opening upon the "valley" of Hinnom. The description of his ride down the valley and the gates that he passed makes it impossible to believe that he was riding down El-Wâd. Remains of three ancient gates have been found by Bliss along the southern course of the Wâdy er-Rabâbi which correspond with the Valley Gate, the Dung Gate, and the Fountain Gate of Neh. 2:13 f. If this identification be accepted, it proves that the *gai* down which Nehemiah rode was not El-Wâd, but Wâdy er-Rabâbi.

It may be observed also that the Arabian geographer Idrisi (1154 A. D.) applies the name Gehennam—that is, Ge-Hinnom, or "valley of Hinnom"—to Wâdy er-Rabâbi. In 1838 the American traveler Robinson found this name still attached to it. The identification of Hinnom with Wâdy er-Rabâbi is now accepted by the majority of topographers. W. Robertson Smith first suggested an identification with El-Wâd, and his authority has led a few to adopt this view;

Warren has proposed an identification with the Kidron, but stands alone in this theory.

A few other minor valleys near Jerusalem are mentioned in the Old Testament. The Valley of Rephaim (Josh. 15:8; 18:16) lay on the other side of the hill, west of the Valley of Hinnom, and formed part of the boundary line between Judah and Benjamin. It is doubtless to be identified with the modern Wâdy el-Werd, through which the railway now runs from Jaffa to Jerusalem. Its upper end, near the present Jerusalem railway station, is not far from the upper end of Wâdy er-Rabâbi, so that the two valleys together form a long continuous boundary line. The "valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes" mentioned in Jer. 31:40 is of unknown location. The Valley of Jehoshaphat ("Yahweh judges"), mentioned in Joel 3:12, is probably a place invented as a scene for the final judgment. Its identification with Wâdy Sitti Maryam is not found before the fourth century of the Christian era, and is destitute of authority.

3. The valley called the Tyropoeon is first mentioned by Josephus in *Wars*, v, 4:1. He says:

Now the Valley of the Tyropoeon, as it was called, was that which we told you before separated the hill of the Upper City from that of the Lower. It extended as far as Siloam; for that is the name of a fountain which hath sweet water in it and this in great plenty also.

Since this valley ran through the heart of the city, and since it came out at the Pool of Siloam, there is no question that it is to be identified with some part of the modern El-Wâd. The only dispute is as to which of the branches of El-Wâd is meant.

The common view is that the main branch, which starts north of the Damascus Gate, runs under the Damascus Gate, and follows the modern street El-Wâd west of the Haram area, is the Tyropoeon of Josephus. This view is favored by the fact that this is the principal valley. In spite of its being filled with sixty feet of débris, the depression is still clearly visible, and if one stands upon the top of the Damascus gate and looks southward, the city evidently lies upon two hills divided by this depression. The people of modern Jerusalem apply to it the name El-Wâd, or "the valley," and they have no names for the smaller lateral valleys that come in from the Jaffa Gate and from the southwest quarter of the city. Ideas are very persistent in the

Orient. If the people of ancient Jerusalem had traced the city valley in a different way, their usage would doubtless have been reflected in the modern conception. It is not too much to say that the northern branch extending from the Damascus Gate is the only valley that one would naturally think of as the Tyropoeon, and that other identifications are due, not to anything in Josephus' description, but rather to traditional notions concerning the hills of Jerusalem.

Robinson first suggested that the Tyropoeon is to be identified with the west branch of the city valley—the one that starts near the Jaffa gate and runs eastward until it joins El-Wâd. This valley corresponds with the line of the present David Street. It is now so filled with rubbish that its existence is hardly apparent, but borings show that in ancient times it must have been considerably deeper. Nevertheless, even then it must have been an inconsiderable depression in comparison with the one that starts north of the Damascus Gate, and it is not likely that it was ever so important as to have had a name of its own. Robinson himself confessed that the northern arm at first impressed him as the real Tyropoeon, and that it was only considerations in regard to the location of Zion and Akra that forced him to make a different identification. These considerations have subsequently shown themselves to be erroneous, so that no reason now exists for identifying the Tyropoeon with the west branch of the city valley.

A third theory, first presented by Tobler and since taken up by Mommert, is that the Tyropoeon is the little valley which starts in the center of the southwest corner of the city and runs in a southeasterly direction until it joins El-Wâd south of the city wall. This view is open to all the objections that have been raised against Robinson's theory. This valley is an insignificant branch of the main gorge that runs through the heart of the city. It bears no name in modern times, and it is unlikely that Josephus would have singled it out as a landmark around which to group the hills of Jerusalem.